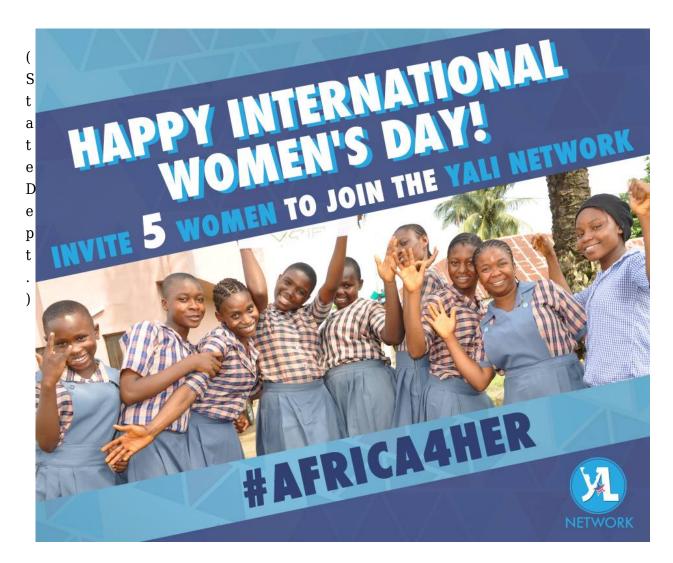
# It's International Women's Day. What Will You Do to Make a Difference?



Happy International Women's Day! For more than 100 years, countries around the world have used March to celebrate women's contributions to world economies, societies and governments.

While that century has seen remarkable progress, with women now working in the highest ranks of business, politics and education, the rights and opportunities for women worldwide still fall short of those for men.

For the last 10 years, the World Economic Forum has measured the global gender gap to demonstrate how the disparities between men and women have damaged global economic growth. Their <u>most recent report</u> highlights the work still to be done:

- In 2015, there were a quarter of a billion more women in the global workforce than in 2006. However, while the average yearly earning for men has risen from \$11,000 to \$21,000 in that time, the average earning for women has gone from \$6,000 to only \$11,000.
- The political realm has seen the most progress for women. Fifty percent of countries have had a female head of state. Yet women still lag behind in legislative bodies around the world, representing only 18 to 19 percent of parliaments and government ministers.

The World Economic Forum estimates that at the rate of progress it's measured in the last 10 years, economic parity for women will not be achieved until 2133.

What will you do to speed that progress? As a member of the YALI Network, you can mark International Women's Day by helping bring gender equality to the YALI Network by <u>inviting 5</u> women to join this exciting group of young leaders.

How will you invest in women and girls? Go to <u>vali.state.gov/pledge</u> to make your pledge.

### <u>Joining the Campaign for the Candidate</u> You Believe In



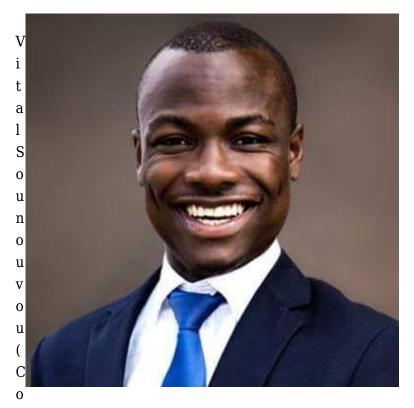
names on voter registration lists outside a polling station in Porto Novo, Benin, during the 2011 election. (© AP Images)

Last year, Vital Sounouvou was working in Dubai, keeping an eye on the run-up to the 2016 elections back home in Benin. At 25, Sounouvou is founder of <a href="Exportunity.com">Exportunity.com</a>, a company working to promote global trade in Africa, to make it cheaper and easier for countries to do business with Benin and other developing African economies.

Some of what he saw was too familiar: candidates with a lot of money to spend who Sounouvou

didn't think were motivated by what was best for Benin. It is common in Benin for candidates to give out <u>cash to voters</u>, even though studies have shown this tactic has little effect on how a voter behaves at the polls.

Where Sounouvou sees the greatest damage and potential for <u>corruption</u> is when candidates pay community leaders to publicly support them. "When local influencers are paid to speak about someone they don't believe in, they end up convincing those who [don't have] access to the real information. People will vote for the person who has been spoken about the most."



urtesy photo)

But when Sounouvou found out a man he admired was planning on running for president, he decided that giving his vote was not enough. He offered his services and returned to Benin to help plan the campaign. "It's the first campaign I've worked on," said Sounouvou. "It's not something I'd do as a career. I'm just doing this because I believe in [the candidate]."

He wasn't alone. Sounouvou's experience with Exportunity.com earned him the position of communications team head for the campaign, and he's been directing a team of 40 young volunteers since January. "Our job is to transmit our candidate's vision to the population and broadcast it in all possible ways."

Sounouvou also coordinates regional communications teams throughout Benin. He and his team meet daily at the campaign office to strategize and to work to counteract falsehoods he says are being spread by the wealthier campaigns.

It's the first campaign in Benin to fully take advantage of social media, using WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. "The best way to combat money is with conviction and truth," Sounouvou said.

"On the average day, I come to the office, where there's a room with computers and a big screen. I

share an office with two other volunteers. Everything is run from that room."

The biggest challenge his team faces is that their candidate doesn't have nearly as much money as his opponents. But Sounouvou thinks the candidate's vision and the enthusiasm of his young supporters in getting the word out can make up for what they don't have in cash.

He credits his candidate's ability to both talk to and listen to young people for the volunteers' willingness to give a month of their time to help him get elected. In the lead-up to the official campaign launch, the candidate would often ask for his young supporters' input. "Three days ago he called asking if I'd seen his speech," said Sounouvou. The candidate asked Sounouvou what he thought and how he could improve his message. "A lot of young people are discovering him right now," Sounouvou said. "A lot of young people are getting involved because the guy knows how to talk to young people."

In the days leading up to the election, Sounouvou feels optimistic about what he and the other volunteers have done to support their candidate. "I can't say if it will be effective, because we haven't voted yet," said Sounouvou. "What I can say is that at the end I'll feel good because I feel that I'm in the right fight."

Take the YALI Network Online Course "<u>Understanding Elections and Civic Responsibility</u>" to learn, among other things, how to lead and enable citizens to create change in their communities.

### <u>Everyone Thrives When Women and Girls</u> Learn



Advancing women's rights in Africa and throughout the world begins with giving girls access to education. In the last decade, remarkable advances have been made in sub-Saharan Africa in girls' enrollment in primary education. But in the majority of sub-Saharan African countries, fewer than 1 in 10 girls graduates from secondary school.

Adolescence is a critical period in a girl's life and shapes her future. In too many parts of the world, this drop-off in education comes when girls become subject to norms that limit their social roles, reduce their choices and threaten their health.

Because of poverty, many families feel they cannot afford to lose the labor their daughters contribute to the household by sending them to school. However, evidence suggests that educating adolescent girls is one of the most effective ways to achieve development goals.

#### Consider these points:

- Girls who attend school as adolescents marry later, have children later and have lower rates of HIV/AIDS.
- Each extra year of a mother's secondary schooling reduces the probability of infant mortality by 5–10 percent.
- Girls with secondary schooling are up to six times less likely to be married as children.
- When a girl in the developing world receives seven years of education, she marries four years later and has 2.2 fewer children.
- A child born to a mother who can read is 50 percent more likely to live past age 5.
- Every year of schooling increases a girl's individual earning power by 10–20 percent, and the return on secondary education is even higher.

Given these and the others facts you'll learn in the upcoming weeks of <u>#Africa4Her</u>, the education of

girls and women goes even beyond its importance as a human right and affects directly their health and prosperity.

How will you invest in women and girls? Go to vali.state.gov/pledge to make your pledge.

## Highlights from a #YALICHAT with Ambassador Cathy Russell

U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Cathy Russell held a Twitter chat with the YALI Network on Wednesday, March 2nd to talk about challenges facing women in Africa and to support the #Africa4Her campaign.



Excited to join some of Africa's most promising leaders in a few minutes for a <u>#YALICHAT</u> on <u>#Africa4Her</u>.

— Cathy Russell (@AmbCathyRussell) March 2, 2016

#### Ambassador Russell started with a question for the YALI Network...

Before I get to your questions, I have a question for you: What challenges do women and girls face in your community? #Africa4Her #YALICHAT

— Cathy Russell (@AmbCathyRussell) March 2, 2016

#### And received some critical answers...

<u>@ambcathyrussell</u> <u>@yalinetwork</u> The general notion that women are inferior to men <u>#Africa4Her</u> #YALICHAT

— Anthony Ekene (@AnthonyEkene) March 2, 2016



scenarios end up in murder cases.<u>#YALICHAT</u> <u>#Africa4Her</u> — Deon Shekuza (@dshekuza) <u>March</u> 2, 2016

<u>@AmbCathyRussell</u> <u>@YALINetwork</u> No access to entrepreneurial skills and self development <u>#YALICHAT</u> — Victoria Okosun (@vickyslyrics) <u>March 2, 2016</u>

#### Then it was on to answer questions from the YALI Network!

<u>@IMaluza</u> Gender-based violence needs to be treated as a crime, not a family matter. #Africa4Her #YALICHAT — Cathy Russell (@AmbCathyRussell) March 2, 2016

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<u>@IsabellaMuthoni</u> A key piece is promoting education for girls. Women's empowerment starts with girls' education. <u>#Africa4Her</u> — Cathy Russell (@AmbCathyRussell) <u>March 2, 2016</u>

@dgeniusjude We see four keys areas: women's economic and political participation, addressing GBV, supporting girls education. #Africa4Her

— Cathy Russell (@AmbCathyRussell) March 2, 2016

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<u>@admasb</u> <u>@YALINetwork</u> My mother has a huge inspiration for me because she taught me and my sisters that we could do anything. <u>#Africa4Her</u>

— Cathy Russell (@AmbCathyRussell) March 2, 2016

<u>@DassilvaManga</u> Success is having the opportunity and ability to do what you want in life. There is no one path to success. <u>#Africa4Her</u>

— Cathy Russell (@AmbCathyRussell) March 2, 2016

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<u>@Sandytey</u> I'd encourage you to look into local village savings and loan initiatives and efforts to see if there are local options.

— Cathy Russell (@AmbCathyRussell) March 2, 2016

#### With hundreds of questions submitted, your curiosity and engagement continues to drive the #Africa4Her campaign to new heights!

I just heard that we've received over 12,000 pledges for #Africa4Her — that's amazing! #YALICHAT

— Cathy Russell (@AmbCathyRussell) March 2, 2016

#### Ambassador Russell signed off with a renewed pledge to the YALI Network...

I'm thrilled to take the <u>#Africa4Her</u> pledge again this year. I hope you'll join me: <u>https://t.co/XHByfgwTqW pic.twitter.com/eor82y8Rrc</u>

— Cathy Russell (@AmbCathyRussell) March 3, 2016

#### The YALI Network looks forward to more #YALICHATS with Ambassador Russell!

<u>@AmbCathyRussell</u> Thank you for the time you spared to share with us, We a humbled. #Africa4Her #YALICHAT @usmissionuganda @YALINetwork

— ABEJA JULIET (@123 abeja) March 3, 2016

<u>@AmbCathyRussell</u> we will join you, lets work for our beloved ones together. <u>#Africa4Her</u>

— yakob g/egzabher (@yakob g) March 3, 2016

# Unlocking Opportunity for Women in Business



small-business owner in Bomani, Tanzania, where she sells lightbulbs, electrical tape and paintbrushes, as well as small, single-unit solar lights and energy-efficient cookstoves. (Courtesy of USAID)

As the YALI Network kicks off #Africa4Her, we're looking at some of the biggest issues facing women in sub-Saharan Africa today. And the issues that hold back women — 50 percent of the population — hold back the countries they live in.

Nowhere is this so clear as in the economic sector. When it comes to fueling economic growth, studies have repeatedly shown that giving women economic opportunity is among the most powerful fuels that exist.

A report by global investment and banking firm Goldman Sachs found that bringing more women into the labor force has the potential to boost a country's per capita income by an average of 12 percent by 2030.

The same research showed that women use their earnings to buy goods and services that improve family and community welfare, which in turn creates further economic growth.

And yet worldwide, 70 percent of businesses owned by women have no access to financial services such as savings accounts and loans. Laws and cultural traditions limit the economic contributions women are able to make, whether by not allowing them to borrow startup money in their own

names, by favoring male relatives in the ownership of capital, or by demeaning their opinions in male-dominated business environments.

We'll look at women in Africa who have taken on these obstacles and made strides toward a more inclusive business culture. We'll look at ways both men and women can address gender bias and unlock the potential for economic growth that women represent.

In the upcoming YALI Network Online Course "Paving the Way for Women Entrepreneurs," entrepreneur/executive E. Diane White gives practical tips on what women can do to ensure their voices are heard in the business world.

How will you invest in women and girls? Go to <u>vali.state.gov/pledge</u> to make your pledge.

### <u>Election Time: Lessons from Young</u> Leaders

Voters in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, line up to cast their ballots on November 29, **≥** 2015. (© AP Images)

Lex Paulson is an attorney, professor, writer, and consultant in international governance. He's worked as a facilitator and trainer for NGOs in Uganda, Burundi, Niger, Ghana, Congo-Brazzaville, Benin, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire, on issues related to democratic engagement and accountable government.

The election was going to be too close to call. The mood at campaign headquarters — "headquarters" being too grand a word; it was just a simple apartment — was anxious. Our candidate, energetic and eloquent, may have been more anxious than any of us. We knew he hadn't slept for three nights before Election Day. We had worked so hard and earned the support of so many voters — but what if they stayed home, or changed their minds? What would we do if our opponent, that career politician with the "trust me" grin, won the election? Would all our work go to waste?

This was the story of my first campaign, but it could be your story too. Elections are a time when a community makes big decisions, and these decisions can bring out the best and the worst in us. I've helped train young activists in Benin and Egypt, worked with political journalists in Uganda and small-business owners in Côte d'Ivoire, and led a national evaluation of election monitors in Guinea. As different as these countries are from one another, at election time I recognize the exact same emotions — nervousness, hopefulness, excitement, doubt — that I felt as a 19-year-old on that city-council campaign in New Haven, Connecticut.

As a professor now at the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris (called "Sciences Po" for short), my

students and I have the privilege of teaming up with the Young African Leaders Initiative Network in 2016 to explore the challenges that face us during election season. How can young people help ensure that elections are fair and peaceful? How can they bring their own ideas — even surprising and new ones — into the political debate? How can we mobilize our communities to get educated about politics and show up on Election Day? How do we ready ourselves for the work after Election Day, win or lose?

Elections can be full of anxiety and frustration, but so too can they bring out our better angels. Campaigns get us out into the community to meet new people, learn about their lives, and debate together how we can make change. We form teams, work hard and find new skills we didn't know we had before. And in the process, new leaders can come out of the most unexpected places. You may be one of them.

In the months ahead, we at Sciences Po will be sharing stories and lessons from all over the world as we engage with you on these powerful questions. We look forward to discussing and debating them with the entire YALI community. Together I think we can bring the promise of democracy — with all its frustrations and faults — another step closer to reality.

In our next post, we'll be sharing lessons on how youth in Senegal peacefully organized to strengthen democracy around the 2012 national elections.

### Want to Energize Young Voters? Look Beyond Elections

Sobel Aziz Ngom (Courtesy photo)



In the run-up to Senegal's 2012 elections, Sobel Aziz Ngom and his friends mounted a voter education campaign that combined social media, print, television and one-on-one outreach. For all the positive effect the campaign had, Ngom came away thinking he had defined the problem he was trying to solve too narrowly.

"The main challenge," Ngom said, "is not how to mobilize youth to vote, but how to make them citizens first." While most of the people he is working to reach were born into citizenship, Ngom sees true citizenship as something different: "Citizenship is something you build and cultivate." Ngom says what matters even more than whether or not youth vote is why they vote. "Most of them are voting because people give them T-shirts or money or promise them things. They don't really understand all the implications of a vote." The main challenge today, he believes, is to activate this sense of citizenship. Being a citizen, he said, "is not just voting every five years — it's more than that. If you want to understand the issues of your country, you have to be more engaged in your local community and public affairs."

Ngom thinks social media offers an important opportunity for candidates and leaders to communicate with youth. He just wishes they used it better. "They don't understand the 'social' in 'social media,'" he said. "They're just announcing information, and you never know if they even read the comments." Recently, he met with a government minister to encourage him to take advantage of social media. "Many people are doing good work that aligns with your policies," he reported telling the official. "You have to know who they are and how to interact with them."

In Senegal, Ngom believes, young people's ability to understand the importance of their vote and the duties of citizenship is undercut by too little knowledge of their own nation's history. "In school, what we learn in class is the Cold War and the World War II," he said. "We learn three or four African heroes from 200 years ago, but we don't know where we are coming from in the last century. It's hard to build your citizenship or have a feeling of belonging if you don't know what you belong to."

Take the YALI Network Online Course "<u>Understanding Elections and Civic Responsibility</u>" to learn, among other things, what your vote means and the responsibilities that come with it.

## **Snowflakes in Niger**

Adrienne Lever discussing civic engagement in Niamey in November 2015. (Courtesy photo)

Adrienne Lever didn't bring much experience to Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. "I graduated [from] Berkeley, got in my car and drove to a campaign office," Lever says of her 23-year-old self. "I just worked as a volunteer until they hired me." She ended up as a regional director for field programs in seven states, and has focused her work on activism and community organizing ever since.

Lever took what she learned from her on-the-ground work for the president's campaign and now helps community leaders who want to effect change.

Recently, Lever traveled to Niger to talk to groups of women and young people in Niamey, Dosso and Tillabéry. In these gatherings, she discussed civic engagement before, during and after elections. She also gave a lecture at the University of Niamey about what she'd learned from the 2008 Obama campaign.

"The strength in grass-roots mobilization comes from a spirit of volunteerism," said Lever, "from engaging people around the issues that they care about and talking to young people about things that are going to touch their lives."

She said that in many countries in Africa she's visited, "there's a broad frustration that young people don't have a voice because no one will elect them." The lesson of American campaigns she's worked on is that "nobody gets involved in a campaign or activity around politics because they think they're going to end up being a member of Congress. They do it because they believe in a cause, because there's something they want to change in the world or their community. That's the spirit of participation that campaigns in the U.S. use to engage young people, by showing them that there is an impact for them, that it's not just about what's happening in the White House."

Among the tools she urged her Nigerien audiences to employ to maximize their networks' effectiveness was the snowflake model of organizing. First articulated by longtime organizer and Harvard professor Marshall Ganz, the snowflake model replaces a single leader in a network with interconnected leaders, each responsible for an aspect of a campaign. In this model, Ganz says, leadership is a practice and not a position.

In the example below, the dark blue figures represent regional organizers who each interact with two green figures (representing community coordinators), who each interact with five community members (light blue).

An illustration of the snowflake model of community organizing, in which a single leader is replaced with interconnected leaders. (State Dept./Doug Thompson)

"People — and not just around election cycles — have been able to find power in building numbers by talking to people one person at a time," said Lever. "By working on changing one heart and mind you build an exponential power base, and that's how you change your environment and your world, ultimately."

## What Do You Need to Know to Run a City?



The campaign's finished, the election's over and, congratulations, you're the new mayor. But how much do you know about creating a city budget or navigating the relationships among your governmental agencies? Running a city day to day — and running it smoothly — comes with a learning curve. Depending on their experience, newly elected leaders can find themselves gobsmacked by what it takes.

That's why, since 1975, Harvard University has hosted its "Seminar on Transition and Leadership for Newly Elected Mayors." The university's Institute of Politics, in conjunction with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, invites mayors-elect of large and small cities across the U.S. for the intensive three-day seminar. The 23 participants from December's seminar came from cities in 18 states, including Pennsylvania, Tennessee, California and Alaska.

"Some of them have been police chiefs and know everything about a police department," said Christian Flynn, who directs the program, "and some were small-business owners who never thought about the police department."

Flynn consults with Harvard faculty and the Conference of Mayors about what should be on the agenda each year. Additions to this year's agenda included "Policing and Public Safety" and "Attracting the Millennial Generation to Your City."



mayors who participated in December's seminar for newly elected mayors at Harvard University. (Courtesy photo)

Finance experts and the sitting mayors of Baltimore and Miami, as well as journalists from the New York Times and CNN, spoke to the new mayors. Workshops covered setting priorities for the first 100 days in office, policing, communicating <u>during a crisis</u> and developing local economies.

Flynn is quick to point out that the program is nonpartisan and that Harvard — rather than any government or corporate or special interest — pays for it.

Alison Silberberg, the new mayor of Alexandria, Virginia, picked up some advice from the police commissioner of Boston, William Evans. "He told me to be careful about all the 'toys' for policing people want you to buy as a new mayor," she said. He suggested that instead of spending money that could strain the city's budget, Silberberg should get police officers out of their cars and away from the desks and into the community to build trust with citizens.

During the seminar, mayors-elect stay in the same hotel and eat their meals together. "There was a remarkable sharing of ideas, not just from the experts, but from all the mayors: 'We have that problem in Nashville, let me tell you what we did,'" Silberberg said.

She has already acted on many recommendations from the seminar. "Mayor [Marty] Walsh of Boston recommended I have a public safety meeting on day one, which was a great idea, and I did it. Well, I did it on day two because the chief of police was out of town."

Flynn dreams of a lengthier seminar, but said that "because of [the mayors'] schedules, it can be hard to get them for the three days. I wish I could get them for a month."

What do your elected officials need to know to serve effectively, and how are they getting that

important information? Take the YALI Network Online Course "<u>Understanding Elections and Civic Responsibility</u>" to learn, among other things, about engaging with candidates and elected officials.

# Online learning spurs offline climate action



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How do you transform online energy into offline action? It helps to have an important subject and an engaged network of community leaders.

The <u>YALI Network</u> is part of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), an effort by President Obama to encourage young African adults to become active in business, community organizing and public management.

The network, with its 200,000 members across sub-Saharan Africa, makes online resources available to young Africans who want to make positive change in their communities and countries.

At the end of November, with the hashtag #YALIGoesGreen, the network began a campaign that bridged online enthusiasm and on-the-ground action. The campaign challenged YALI Network members to share their stories on the YALI Network Facebook page, Twitter, and social media of how climate change affects their communities and to earn a certificate with the three-part YALI Network Online Course "Understanding Climate Change."

Things really got interesting with the challenge to become a "Green Champion" by hosting a <u>#YALILearns</u> event using the course's discussion and activity guide. Throughout December, network members all over sub-Saharan Africa sent feedback and pictures of events they hosted in their communities and schools.

David Mboko Mavinga introduced 35 students at Notre Dame de la Providence secondary school in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, to the science of climate change and discussed with them everyday ideas for taking action. The event was important, Mavinga said, "because we speak about climate change on the radio, the television and in newspapers, but very few people speak about it in daily life."

In Accra, Ghana, Temitope Amujo offered an event he called "Sustainable Climate Actions: From Reactions to Actions" for a gathering of 24 local professionals just before the <u>Paris climate summit</u> at the start of December.

By the end of January, the YALI Network reported over-the-top results, having turned an important online discussion into real action.

